

# **FINAL**

## **SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA WETLANDS RECOVERY PROJECT BOARD OF GOVERNORS MEETING MINUTES**

**OCTOBER 17, 2002  
Ventura, CALIFORNIA**

### **1. Meeting attendees:**

- Chair: Sam Schuchat, Coastal Conservancy
- Paul Benedict, Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Bill Berry, California Department of Parks and Recreation
- Susan Cloke, Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board
- Charles Domm (representing Peter Douglas), California Coastal Commission
- Valerie Chambers, National Marine Fisheries Service
- Beth Jines (representing Winston Hickox), California Environmental Protection Agency
- Charles Raysbrook (representing Robert Hight), California Department of Fish and Game
- Mike Schulz, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- Wanda Smith (representing Gerald Thibeault), Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board
- Terry Tamminen, Environment Now, Chair of the Public Advisory Committee
- Paul Thayer, State Lands Commission
- Ruth Villalobos, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Steve Weisberg, Southern California Coastal Water Research Project, Chair of the Science Advisory Panel

### **2. Welcomes and Introductions**

The October 17, 2002, Governing Board meeting also served as the opening session of the 2002 WRP Symposium. The Board and Symposium participants were welcomed to Ventura by several local officials, including: Ray Di Giulio, Mayor of Ventura; John Flynn, Ventura County Supervisor, member of the WRP Public Advisory Committee, and co-chair of the Ventura County Task Force; and Steve Bennett, Ventura County Supervisor and member of the WRP Public Advisory Committee. State Assemblywoman Hannah Beth Jackson also welcomed the group to Ventura and re-iterated her commitment to protecting Southern California's coastal resources. Finally, Mati Waiya, Executive Director of Ventura CoastKeeper, sang a Chumash song to open the Symposium.

### **3. Recovering Wetlands: Where have we been and where are we going?**

Paul Michel, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Chair of the WRP Managers Group, gave a presentation on the WRP's past activities and future challenges. A key theme of the presentation was the tremendous challenge of preserving and restoring wetland resources in

the highly urbanized landscape of Southern California. The presentation also highlighted that over 70% of the \$61.8 million dollars spent on WRP projects to date had come from the state. Future efforts of the WRP will need to focus on securing a greater share of federal, local, and private funds.

#### **4. Initiatives to Improve Regional Planning**

Dr. Eric Stein, Southern California Coastal Water Research Project and member of the WRP Science Advisory Panel (SAP), gave a presentation on SAP initiatives to improve regional planning for wetlands recovery. In May of 2002, the SAP released a position paper recommending that the WRP pursue three programs to improve regional planning:

- Establish quantifiable recovery objectives
- Develop and implement a regional monitoring program
- Develop decision support tools

Establishing quantifiable recovery objectives will give the WRP a framework for developing a regional monitoring program, guide success criteria for the WRP, and guide project selection. The SAP is proposing a multi-scale, integrated regional monitoring program. The landscape level of the monitoring program is an inventory of wetland resources in Southern California. The 1997 Southern California Coastal Wetland Inventory was a first step in this process. The mid-scale will provide a general characterization of the condition of the region's resources through broad-scale surveys. Finally, the most intensive level of the regional monitoring program will be site-specific monitoring associated with restoration and/or research projects. In order to develop the regional monitoring program, the SAP will be working on the following projects: create and update the current and historic inventories of wetlands; conduct a regional survey to assess status and trends; develop criteria to monitor the success of the WRP; develop a coordinated methodology for project-specific monitoring; and outline the administrative infrastructure and technological systems necessary to establish standardized, electronic reporting of monitoring data.

The Wetlands Recovery Project needs decision support tools at both the regional and project specific level. A regional decision support tool will help the federal, state, and local partners to understand which areas provide the most significant contributions to wetland and watershed functioning. This information can be used to target project development efforts, as well as to help establish regional priorities for project selection. In addition, the WRP needs decision support tools to help with evaluation and selection of specific projects. The SAP is working with partners to develop tools at both scales for use by the Managers Group and local partners. The NOAA Coastal Services Center is working with the SAP to develop a GIS-based analysis tool that will assess riparian habitat throughout the region.

Following the presentation, the Board discussed the three initiatives, raising key questions and concerns.

Terry Tamminen emphasized the importance of coordinating the WRP's work with efforts of the California Legacy Project. Dr. Stein reported that the SAP is coordinating closely with

the Legacy Project and is participating in both the statewide wetlands inventory effort and the riparian habitat joint venture.

Mr. Tamminen also emphasized the importance of citizen monitoring efforts throughout the region and noted that this is an important resource that the WRP should draw on in implementing its regional monitoring program. The SAP is currently coordinating with the task forces on all three initiatives and will consider using citizen monitoring programs in setting up its rapid assessment program.

Susan Cloke questioned how the WRP is pursuing its goal to integrate wetlands recovery with other public objectives. Dr. Stein responded that the WRP is trying to develop projects that meet multiple objectives and are not mutually exclusive of other public goals. Steve Weisberg noted that a key issue of this goal is how to integrate water quality objectives into the WRP's efforts. It can be a difficult balance to strike. For instance, Dr. Stein pointed out that stormwater management efforts overlap significantly with the WRP's programs; however, managing stormwater is not a core goal of the WRP.

Ruth Villalobos noted that the presentation questioned what is the appropriate scale for the WRP's monitoring program. She concurred with the SAP's recommendation that the program needs to occur on multiple levels. Ms. Villalobos recommended that in developing the quantifiable recovery objectives the SAP should consider how other agencies or municipalities might use them. Finally, she stressed that decision support tools developed for the WRP need to include both habitat type and diversity in the assessment of priorities.

Steve Weisberg noted that these programs reflect a maturing of the Wetlands Recovery Project towards a more strategic approach. He emphasized that the WRP will be faced with both administrative and technical challenges in setting up a monitoring program for the region. Bill Berry noted that the an integrated, collaborative monitoring program has been established in Monterrey Bay and might be a model for the WRP.

Ruth Villalobos noted that costs for both monitoring and operations and maintenance are substantial and are often not planned for in restoration projects. This is an issue that the WRP will need to address. Chuck Raysbrook confirmed that the Department of Fish and Game has acquired more property than it can effectively manage or restore with its current resources. In the last five years, DFG has acquired about 25,000 acres in the five coastal counties.

Beth Jines informed the Board that CalEPA is involved in a program to identify environmental indicators and to establish a baseline or framework for assessing environmental quality in the state. Data generated from WRP monitoring efforts may be of value to this program.

Board members asked for further elaboration on why the SAP was recommending not setting numerical acreage targets at this time. Dr. Stein explained that the SAP feels the same objectives can be met more quickly by prioritizing habitat types that have experienced the greatest loss and quantifying the WRP's success in preserving and restoring these habitats.

**5. WRP Highlights**

Presentations were made to the Governing Board on three program areas:

- Peter Brand (Coastal Conservancy) updated the Board on efforts to acquire and restore up to 750 acres of wetland and associated habitats at Ormond Beach.
  - Brenda Freshman (Nature Trust of the Santa Monica Mountains), Bobby Cochran (Summit to Sea), and Sujatha Jahagirdar, (CalPIRG, member of Public Advisory Committee) provided an overview of education activities that the PAC and County Task Forces are involved in. These activities were described in detail in the Board packet.
  - Bob Thiel (Community Environmental Council, Santa Barbara Watershed Coordinator and Task Force Co-Chair) summarized the WRP Watershed Coordinator program that is currently being funded through a Proposition 13 grant from the State Water Resources Control Board.
6. Questions or comments about the meeting minutes should be directed to Trish Chapman at the Coastal Conservancy, (510) 286-0749, fax (510) 286-0470, or e-mail: [tchapman@scc.ca.gov](mailto:tchapman@scc.ca.gov).